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THE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER'S EQUIPMENT IN FRENCH

In any kind of work, the selection of tools and methods is determined by the aim to be attained. The fundamental question before us is then to determine the general aim of French instruction in our High Schools. With all due deference to views divergent from my own on this point, I hold that the cardinal aim and purpose of such instruction must be to impart to the learner such capacity to read with critical accuracy and appreciation ordinary French as may be to him a key to a broadened culture, and to guide his first steps towards an appreciative acquaintance with a foreign literature. And I am convinced that all efforts used for other ends, as especially for imparting a speaking knowledge of the language, are misdirected in proportion as they delay or prevent the attainment of this important end.

A protest, I think, is needed right here against the all too common and superficial fallacy of considering the mere capacity to speak more or less correctly a foreign language as equivalent to culture. It may of course be made a valuable aid in acquiring culture, but it is in nowise identical with it. There is no necessary relation between the two terms. Many a highly cultured person speaks no other language than his own, while many a vulgar shallow-brain speaks glibly one or more foreign tongues. Or, to put it in another way: The mere capacity to express "light" also by *lumière*, or "The deep Tragedy of

Macbeth" also by *das tiefe Trauerspiel Macbeth*, does not in itself imply any mental gain, while an intelligent conception of the nature of light, or of the moral and poetical significance of Macbeth does. The capacity to render "To be good to one's self alone, is to be good for nothing" by *N'être bon qu'à soi, c'est n'être bon à rien*, or "Ask not an honest man for his pedigree" by *Al hombre bueno no le busquen*—*abolengo*, does not necessarily imply any culture gain, while even the ignorant man's desire to live for higher purposes than ignoble selfishness, or to value true worth more than ancestry does. Many a linguist, who has no direct practical use for his speaking knowledge of foreign tongues, would reckon it a great gain, could he convert that knowledge into a greater power over the language he has to use every day.

I readily acknowledge the great value of linguistic fluency for purely utilitarian purposes, and nowise undervalue the claims and importance of these. And I bow to the excellent work often done by talented teachers using the conversational or natural method, and to many admirable text-books published on that method. But I contend that such purposes, however respectable in themselves, and however legitimate in special schools or classes, cannot rightly determine the method of teaching modern languages in ordinary classes in our public schools or colleges. And this not merely on the idealistic ground that it should be the supreme aim of such schools to develop the power for culture and to impart genuine culture, but also on the more practical ground that only a small minority of their students ever come into such relations that they will need a speaking knowledge of a foreign language, and that, therefore, it would be an imposition on the great majority to compel them to sacrifice time and labor for the benefit of the favored few. They would be forced to learn simply to forget, or at best to retain some useless phrases enabling them, as society *dilettanti*, to pay tribute to an empty fad.

Of course, if the conversational method could, as some claim, lead more rapidly than the grammar and reading method to

the acquisition of that knowledge which is of importance to all, much might be said in its favor. But the claim is entirely fallacious. In teaching students to read a foreign language with accuracy and appreciation, the direct road, is as in everything else, the shortest, the concentration of effort unto one end the most effective. What can, indeed, be expected from an endeavor to convey such knowledge by the roundabout method of imparting simultaneously, in a year or two, during a few hours a week interspersed between other exercises which take the lion share of the student's effort, a speaking knowledge of a foreign tongue to a large class of unequally gifted learners of whom each can have only a few minutes to his share? The attempt must of necessity be abortive, all the more as only a small minority of teachers actually can have a ready and accurate command of the language as a spoken idiom. Here as elsewhere, *qui trop embrasse, mal étreint*. And I have no doubt many teachers of modern languages in our colleges and universities could testify to the superficial and inaccurate knowledge, not to say tendencies, of students thus prepared.

Nor should the value of the mental discipline of older methods be counted for nought. This discipline is often sneered at by votaries of methods by which foreign languages will be learned "without effort", almost "unconsciously (?)." There is such a thing as diluting the intellectual food, until its nourishing quality is lost. Mere parrot-like drill is not mental training. The very difference between lower and higher intellectuality is the more consciously reflective power of the latter. The highest aim of culture, besides forming character, is to enable man to observe intelligently accumulated facts, and deduct truth from them. And any training that tends to develop such power is in itself valuable. I am not advocating the now fortunately obsolescent method of making grammar drill its own object. Even now-a-days, when the intricacies of grammar are being presented more and more on an intelligible basis, such a method would mean neglecting a chief aim for a side issue. But I hold that whatever intelligent grammar drill is needed to prepare

the student for reading is a valuable discipline, and that the attempt to save him all reasoning effort is to treat him too much like a child.

It is on the basis of the principles advocated above that the following suggestions are here submitted to those who prepare for teaching French in our High Schools. The plan submitted nowise pretends to be the only acceptable one among several other possible plans. Here, as so often, there are many roads leading to Rome, and I only point out one which I have found good and safe to travel. It should be observed also that I have had in view—not so much the teacher already more or less prepared for his task by previous college training, as the general apprentice, within or without college walls.

The first question presenting itself is then how the teacher of French should himself be adequately equipped for his work. That he should be able to satisfy all the immediate wants of his classes throughout the entire course, goes without saying. That, besides, he should be in possession of enough knowledge to inspire his class with the feeling that he is drawing them on towards higher standards, is also evident. In this latter regard no definite limit can be set, and the ambitious teacher who has fairly realized that all knowledge is at best only relatively perfect, will keep on extending unceasingly the range of his own as time and circumstances may allow.

In his class-work the teacher will be called upon to give a sound and thorough instruction in French *pronunciation*, *grammar*, and *reading*. Each of these subjects may then properly be considered by itself.

PRONUNCIATION.—The teacher's pronunciation should be as accurate as he possibly can make it. To undertake to instruct a class in French without a very fair mastery of French pronunciation would be an imposition on the class. A good pronunciation cannot be learned from books alone. Oral instruction from an educated native or a well-schooled American teacher is necessary ; and the more the learner can have of such help the better. Yet, if he be so situated that he can enjoy

only a minimum of outside instruction, a tolerably good result may be attained by submitting, as often as feasible, the pronunciation of all the words, phrases and exercises he has learned in the grammar, and of the first pages in the reader, to the close scrutiny of a competent teacher; and then by memorizing and repeating it until it is thoroughly assimilated. When the learner has begun reading French an excellent practice in pronunciation is also afforded by reading phonetically transcribed texts. The publication of similar texts for beginners is yet a desideratum in America.* Until any such be forthcoming, good use may be made of Paul Passy's *Le français parlé*, with ordinary French orthography on one page and phonetical transliteration on the other (published by O. R. Reisland, Leipsig; 121 pages; price 2 marks); and when the learner has become somewhat familiar with French also of Passy's *Le maître phoné Figue*, a little monthly journal with only transliterated texts (4 francs a year, address *Le maître phonétique*, Neuilly sur Seine, France). For a special study of the French sounds may be recommended especially Passy's *Les sons du français* (96 pp.; Librairie Firmin-Didot; 1 franc, 50 cents). Further suggestions in this line will be found in the books just referred to.

GRAMMAR.—All grammar work in our High Schools should be confined to such elements of form and syntax as are positively needed in order to read French with accuracy. This implies far less grammar study than is needed for learning to speak or write the language with tolerable correctness. High School students may indeed be taken through all grammar needed for reading ordinary French in some forty lessons, provided the subject is properly limited and handled. The mastery of a brief, systematic treatise of the elements of the language should be the corner-stone of the teacher's own preparation in this line. Among several elementary grammars that might be used, the following will be found more or less closely adapted to the plan of study

* Yet, one is now promised by Rambeau and J. Parry (Holt & Co.) which we may wish Godspeed.

advocated in this paper : * *Grandgent's Short French Grammar* [150 pages, without exercises, published separately ; price 60 cents, or with the exercises, 85 cents. D. C. Heath & Co., Boston.] *Joynes' Minimum French Grammar and Reader* [269 pages ; teachers' price 75 cents, Henry Holt & Co., New York] ; *Whitney's Brief French Grammar* [177 pages ; teachers price 65 cents ; Henry Holt & Co., New York ; *Edgren's Compendious French Grammar*, Part I. [66 pages ; 35 cents, or with Part II. \$1.12 ; D. C. Heath & Co., Boston.] These grammars are all sufficient introductions to reading. They vary, however, with regard to the fulness of the grammatical material, and yet more in the amount of exercises to that material (Grandgent's English themes published separately, being the fullest, and Edgren's, in part I., fewest.)† When the learner has mastered any of these introductory courses in grammar, he should begin reading immediately and according to the suggestions made below. But he will do well to combine with his reading a gradual extension of his grammar knowledge. To this purpose either of these two grammars may be suggested : *Whitney's Practical French Grammar* [442 pages ; teachers' price \$1.30 ; Henry Holt & Co.] or *Edgren's Compendious French Grammar*, Part II., [293 pages ; with Part I. \$1.12 ; D. C. Heath & Co]. These works both contain all the essential features of French accidence, syntax, and prosody, with exercises ; and a brief account of the historical development of French from Latin. Edgren's grammar contains, besides, brief notices on the history of the Syntactical Constructions, and a chapter on the relations between French words and their equivalents in English. Whitney's work it should be observed, is divided into two parts, of which the first (201

* If here and in the following only a few texts-books are specially mentioned, no disparagement of others is thereby implied. It does not come within my plan to make a comparative estimate of a list of books that might be profitably used ; some I simply suggest (and in alphabetical order ; with one explainable exception) of those which seem to me specially suited for the end in view.

† Those using Edgren's grammar who may possibly wish more English French exercises than it contains can find such in *Supplementary Exercises to Edgren's French Grammar*, by Sucard (33 pages, D. C. Heath & Co.) Part II. of the grammar also contains additional exercises.

pp.) contains the most important facts of the language grouped with regard to practical convenience into a series of lessons with needed exercises, while the second is a more systematic and detailed presentation of the same subject with constant reference back to the first book for more elementary rules.

It should be added here that to learners who desire, from the start, much practice towards the development of a speaking knowledge of French, and who are less anxious to begin reading the soonest possible, may be recommended, as a substitute for the course outlined above, *Chardenal's Complete Course* [353 pages; \$1; Allyn & Bacon, Boston], or *Whitney's Practical French* [teachers' price 90 cents, or by mail \$1; Henry Holt & Co., New York].

The learner who has mastered any of the courses suggested in the preceding may consider himself well grounded in ordinary French Grammar. And if he has been using Whitney's or Edgren's larger works, he will also know the fundamental principles of the development of French from Latin (more fully stated in the latter). Should his interest, when he is well grounded in ordinary French, lead him to further inquiries into this interesting field, he may use with much profit these elementary introductions by *Clédat: Grammaire historique du français* [imported, about \$1] and *Grammaire élémentaire de la vieille langue française* [imported, about \$1]; or this more complete work by *Brunot: Précis de grammaire historique de la langue française* [imported, about \$1.50]. An excellent little book, recently published, is also *Darmesteter: Cours de Grammaire historique de la langue française* [Muret, Sudre.] Further suggestions in this direction are needless. Those desirous of penetrating deeper into the study of French Grammar may be guided by statements in printed graduate courses in Roman Philology in our leading Universities, or by special inquiry of competent persons.

READING.—As soon as the learner has become familiar with his elementary grammar, he should at once, as is already said, begin reading, continuing at the same time the enlargement of

his grammatical knowledge. He may begin with *Van Daell's Introduction to French authors* [pp. 171 text, 76 vocabulary : Ginn & Co., Boston], or *Super's Preparatory French Reader*, [pp. 162 text, 15 notes, 41 vocabulary ; 80 cents ; D. C. Heath & Co.], or *Whitney's Introductory French Reader* [pp. 178 text, 14 notes (with references to Whitney's grammar), 53 vocabulary ; 70 cents ; Henry Holt & Co.] If a good Reader with phonetically transcribed text be available, such a book will no doubt be the most useful. In his earliest reading he should have in view especially an accurate and literal translation of the text before him and a careful grammatical analysis of the same. Literalness and grammatical parsing will gradually, as he advances, have to be dropped in favor of rapid reading and attention to the stylistic or other excellencies of his text. Indeed, it would be a waste of time and energy to dwell too much on grammatical analysis if his reading is to be appreciative and fruitful in a linguistic and literary sense. Yet, in order to secure due critical habit, even while rapid appreciative reading is the main thing, the learner is advised to select every day from the very start some small portion of his text (one or several lines) for careful analysis with regard to pronunciation, forms (all possible forms of the inflectional words inclusive) and construction, and to commit this portion to memory. And not only that. If he is acquainted with Latin, as he ought to be, he will find it both interesting and useful to look up in an etymological dictionary (cf. below) the derivation of the words in the portion thus studied (or of part of them), and try to account for their present form, as well as he may, by reference to his grammar, if it contain etymological principles (as do Whitney's and Edgren's). Moreover, he should compare the French words thus studied with their English cognates where there are any—as there will be in nearly seven cases out of ten—and notice their difference of form and meaning.

The grammar analysis suggested above will in time be superfluous. The critical learner can easily determine when. As for the historical and comparative work it will depend on his

own taste. It ought not, indeed, to be taken up, except by the way, while the learner is struggling with the actual forms and the translation of the language. But brought in accessorially, as a diversion, it will be productive of good results, giving him glimpses of fields not less interesting and important than the purely literary, and enabling him to illumine his own teaching.

For continued reading the learner may easily make his choice from the catalogues of Allyn & Bacon, Ginn & Co., Heath & Co., Holt & Co. He should begin with texts of comparatively modern authors, preferably such as illustrate French history and manners, then continue with more purely literary prose and poetry, and finally, when he is conversant enough with modern French, take up the classical authors of the 17th century. Though the learner can easily make selections himself to suit his own taste out of a great number of available texts published by the above mentioned firms, and none of them offering peculiar difficulties, especially provided as they are with notes, yet a progressive course something like the following,* which includes French History, Fiction, Poetry, and Science, may be here suggested for early reading, until the learner has chosen his own favorite field of deeper French study: *Verne: Le Tour du Monde* (Heath & Co.); *Thiers: Expédition de Bonaparte en Egypte* (Holt & Co.); *Super's Readings from French History* (Allyn & Bacon); *Verne: Michel Strogoff* (Holt & Co.); *Souvestre: Un Philosophe sous les Toits* (Heath & Co.); *Luquien's French Prose, Popular Science* (Ginn & Co.); *Sand: La Mare au Diable* (Heath & Co.); *Taine: Les Origines de la France Contemporaine* (Holt & Co.); *Victor Hugo: Quatrevingt-treize* (Ginn & Co.); *Victor Hugo: Hernani* (Heath & Co.); *La Hendriksen's La Triade française* (especially Victor Hugo's poems; Schoenhof); *Corneille: Le Cid* (Holt & Co.); *Racine Athalie* (ditto); *Molière: Le Misanthrope* (ditto).

No attempt will be made here to point out a course for a deeper study of French literature or any part of it. The student

* The texts mentioned varying in price from 25 cents to \$1.

must be guided in this respect by his own preference entirely. He will do well to read in connection with the preceding course some brief survey of the French Literature, such as *Duval's Petite Histoire de la Littérature française* (pp. 339; D. C. Heath & Co.) in order to get his bearings and be helped in his choice.

The question of a dictionary is largely one of convenience and cost. In both regards any of the following—varying in fulness as indicated near enough by the number of pages—may be recommended: *Gasc's Dictionary of the French and English Languages*, [French-English part 600 pp., English-French part 586 pp.; teachers' price \$2.25; or in small type 647 pp., \$1; Henry Holt & Co.]; *Heath's French and English Dictionary* [French-English part 580 pp., English-French part 542 pp., \$1.50; D. C. Heath & Co.]; *Masson's French and English Dictionary* [French-English part 168 pp.; English-French part 243 pp., \$1; Appleton & Co.]; *Spiers' New French-English Dictionary* [French-English alone 782 pp.; \$4.85 by mail; Ginn & Co.] The shortest of these dictionaries, Masson's, gives the derivation of French words, and will in this respect, though not always up to modern date, prove useful. The student wishing a critical dictionary of French etymologies may use Scheler's *Dictionnaire étymologique française* [importing price about \$5.50, Christern, etc.]. More complete works than those referred to above need not be reported here, as the student interested in philological research will easily find them out for himself.

Finally, it may be added that the student who wishes to acquire a speaking or writing knowledge of French should learn thoroughly all the English-French exercises of his grammar, retranslate from English into French portions of the texts he reads, and above all, commit copiously pieces of French prose and poetry to memory. It goes without saying that the more association he can have with educated Frenchmen the better, and that nothing can better round off his own preparation to teach French than a sojourn in France for some time. Indeed,

every teacher of that language, even in our High Schools, should make it an aim, where feasible, to spend at least a year abroad, in as exclusive communion with the French people as circumstances may allow. But the usefulness of such a course need not be urged here, it will force itself upon the mind of every ambitious teacher.

After this general outline of the aims and methods that should guide the student preparing himself to become a teacher of French in our High Schools, little need be added concerning his own plans of instruction when once he enters on his career as teacher. He will, of course, if he finds it good, follow, in the main, the plan he has himself pursued, as far as applicable to his work, singling out for his classes what seems to him best suited for them, and dwelling on such topics as he may deem especially useful or interesting. The general aim and scope of his teaching being well defined, great liberty of choice may, indeed, be exercised within it. The magic of the teacher is always in himself, not in his method. His power and character will always display themselves in his work. If he is an enthusiastic and coöperative teacher he will stir the sympathies and energies of his pupils. If he is of the growing kind, always eager to extend his sphere of knowledge, every advance will tell also indirectly upon his students, leading them, if even by imperceptible degrees, to higher standards and ideals.

The following short suggestions may here be made by way of a summary. Make correct and appreciative reading of modern and classical French the chief object of your instruction. Teach the class the elements of the language from some brief, systematic grammar, the best one available. Teach these elements in a way to impart precise and unhesitating knowledge, and without fear of overburdening the student's intellect, even if he has to learn carefully various verb-paradigms before he begins reading. Take up reading as soon as these elements are mastered. Not before. Reading without such preparation is lame guess-work. Insist from the outset on a correct pronunciation. Assign during a time (as during a

term after reading is begun) a short amount of the reading lesson for thorough analysis with regard to pronunciation and grammar. Point out relations between French and English, and generally draw the student's attention to higher standards of knowledge. By degrees, as reading becomes easier, and grammar drill can be relaxed and left, dwell on stylistic and other literary merits. When the lessons begin to be rather long to be rendered line by line into English, read, or have the class read, the French alone, asking for a translation only of uncommon words and difficult passages, enough to control the correctness and earnestness of the student's preparation. And, finally, if you have a speaking command of the language, begin to speak French to the class as soon as it can be safely done without waste of time. But do this only gradually where the class can follow you without wasteful explanations; and do not, as a rule, require the students to answer in French, because that means, with ordinary classes and under ordinary circumstances, frustrating the main purpose of your instruction for more trivial ends.

Valuable suggestions on the method of teaching French may be found in *Methods of Teaching Modern Languages*, addresses and articles by various instructors. [pp. 185; 60 cents; Heath & Co.]

A. H. Edgren

University of Nebraska, Oct. 1894

THE CURRICULUM OF A SMALL HIGH SCHOOL

In constructing a programme of studies for a small high school a very important consideration is the well-being of the teacher. It is true, of course, that the school is not maintained for the sake of the teacher; but it is likewise true that those communities that disregard the personal welfare of their teachers do not have, and can not have, the best schools. In view of this, it is not unreasonable, as a preliminary to the discussion of the main proposition of this paper, to ascertain and clearly state the conditions under which a teacher in a